THE WOODCUTTER'S DOG: Translated from the French of CHARLES NODIER

Illustrated by
CLAUD LOVAT FRASER

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THE WOODCUTTER'S DOG

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF CHARLES NODIER · ILLUSTRATED BY CLAUD LOVAT FRASER

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Foreword

CHARLES NODIER'S fascinating story "Le Chien de Brisquet," which has enthralled generations of French children, is now introduced to English children of the present day, with a few delightful illustrations by that exquisite artist, the late Claud Lovat Fraser.

The Woodcutter's Dog

IN the Forest of Lions, not far from the village of La Goupilière and close to a fine well which belongs to St. Mathurin's Chapel, lived a kindly soul, a woodcutter by trade, who was called Brisquet, or, as often as not, the Man with the Trusty Axe.

He and his wife, whose name was Brisquette, lived poorly enough on the sale of his faggots. God had given them two pretty children—a seven year old boy, who was dark and was called Biscotin, and Biscotine, a girl of six who was very fair.

They had, besides, a dog, a curly-haired mongrel, which was all black

except for its nose, and that was red as fire. They called it Bichonne.

You may remember the time when such numbers of wolves swarmed in

the Forest of Lions. It was the year of the Great Snow, when the poor folk found it so hard to keep alive. The misery in the country was dreadful.

Brisquet, who never shirked his work, and, thanks to his good axe, had no fear of wolves, said to his wife one morning: "Oh, do not let either Biscotin or Biscotine run about outside until the master of the wolf-hounds arrives. It will be dangerous if they do. There is room enough for them to play between the mound and the pond, now that I have put stakes along the water to prevent any

accident happening to them. And do not let Bichonne out either; she is always wanting to be on the run."

Morning after morning he cautioned Brisquette in the same way.

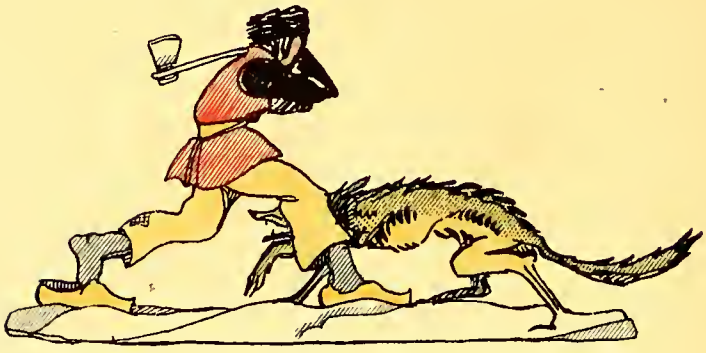
One evening Brisquet did not reach home at his usual time. Brisquette went to the doorstep, returned, went back again, and "Oh, dear; oh, dear!" she said, wringing her hands, "how late he is!" Then she ran out of doors, shouting, "Oh, Brisquet, Brisquet!"

And Bichonne leaped as high as her shoulders, as if she were asking, "Shall *I* not go?"

"Be quiet!" said Brisquette; then turning to the children, "Listen, Biscotine, run as far as the mound and see if your father is not coming. And you, Biscotin, take the path along the pond, and be careful lest some of the stakes should be missing. And shout out loud 'Brisquet! Brisquet!'

"Be quiet, Bichonne!"

The children went on and on, and when they met at the place where the path by the pond and the path by the



mound crossed, Biscotin exclaimed excitedly, "I shall find my father, I will find him, or the wolves shall eat me up!"

"And they shall eat me up too!" said Biscotine.

* * * * * *

All this while Brisquet was returning by the Puchay high road, passing the Asses' Cross at Mortemer Abbey, because he had a bundle of faggots to leave at Jean Paquier's.

"Have you seen the children?" Brisquette asked him.

"The children," said Brisquet, "the children! Oh mercy, have they gone out?"

"I sent them out as far as the mound and the pond to meet you, but you had taken another road."

Brisquet gripped his good axe and set off running towards the mound.

"Won't you take Bichonne with you?" his wife called after him.

But Bichonne was already far ahead —so far that Brisquet immediately lost sight of her.

In vain he shouted, "Biscotin! Biscotine!" There was no answer.

Then he burst into tears for he believed that the children were lost.

When he had run a great way he thought he heard Bichonne's bark. With his good axe above his head he dashed through the thicket in the direction of the sound.

Bichonne had reached the spot at the very moment a huge wolf was about to spring upon the children. She had flung herself between, barking furiously so that she might warn Brisquet.

With one stroke of his good axe the woodman laid the wolf lifeless, but it was too late to save Bichonne. She was already dead.

Brisquet, Biscotin and Biscotine returned home to Brisquette. There was great joy, but they were all weeping. There was not a look that was not turned towards Bichonne.

Brisquet buried Bichonne at the foot of the little garden, under a great stone on which the schoolmaster wrote in Latin:

Here lies Bichonne,
Brisquet's poor dog.

Ever since that time we have had the saying, "Unlucky as Brisquet's dog which went to the wood once, and the wolf ate him."

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